



Honoring veterans
Veterans Day ceremonies were held across Oahu. See photos on page A-5.



Paint with a kick
Sailors shoot it out at Bellows outdoor range. See story on page B-1.

Kaho'olawe access returned

JO1 Daniel J. Calderón
Editor

Rear Adm. Barry McCullough, commander Navy Region Hawai'i and commander Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, visited Kaho'olawe Nov. 6 and thanked almost 400 workers from the PARSON-UXB Joint Venture for their efforts in clearing unexploded ordnance, scrap metal and other debris from the island of Kaho'olawe. McCullough visited the island less than a week before the Navy returned access control of the island to the state of Hawai'i.

"This was an unprecedented effort. I'm confident that we've accomplished what Title 10 required us to do," said McCullough.

Hawai'i has had title to Kaho'olawe since May 1994. The Navy retained the right to control access to the island during cleanup. The right to access control expired on Tuesday. On Wednesday, at a ceremony at the Queen Iolani palace in downtown Honolulu, the state of Hawai'i accepted responsibility for access to Kaho'olawe and thanked the Navy for cleaning up the island. The cleanup has taken the Navy

nearly a decade. In that time, workers have removed ordnance from over 20,000 acres of land of the 26,000 accessible acres on the island. The entire island is 28,800 acres. However, due to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rules, workers were not allowed to sweep through approximately 2,000 acres of deep gullies across the island. Throughout the cleanup effort, the Navy has spent \$460 million.

On Veteran's Day in 1993, President Bill Clinton signed the fiscal year 1994 appropriations act. The act directed the Navy to do two things before six months had passed – convey title for the island of Kaho'olawe back to the state of Hawai'i and enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the state regarding cleanup of the land. The original agreement called for \$400 million to be spent on cleanup of the island.

Both were accomplished by May 1994 and a ceremony was held on Maui facing Kaho'olawe as the deed and MOU were signed.

According to Becky Hommon, Navy Region Hawai'i environmental counsel, during the cleanup phase, the state had



Photo by JOC(SW) Tim Paynter
Rear Adm. Barry McCullough praises the nearly 400 workers on Kaho'olawe on Nov. 5 for the work they have done in clearing millions of tons of debris and ordnance across the island.

▼ See KAHOO LAWE, A-3

Three Pacific Fleet Sailors selected for officer program

JO2(SW) Alyssa Batarla
U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

Three Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet Sailors were among the 400 Sailors selected Navywide for the Seaman-to-Admiral (STA) 21 program Oct. 19.

Electronics Technician 1st Class Tameika Abron, Fire Controlman 1st Class (SW) David Zieroth and Mess Management Specialist 2nd Class (SW) Stephen Swidersky were selected for the fiscal year 2004 naval officer commissioning program.

"It's a great opportunity for anyone who gets selected," said Abron,

lead technician for Joint Mobile Ashore Support Terminal Pacific Fleet. "It's a stepping stone in my career."

"I've always wanted to work in the medical field, but when I joined the Navy, they didn't have a big push for women to join the corpsman rating," continued Abron, who was selected for the Nurse Corps. "Now it's time for me to do my life's dream."

STA-21, which combined several commissioning programs to ensure each Sailor received equal benefits while attending college, allows the Sailors to remain at their current enlisted pay grade and covers up to

\$10,000 per year for school.

"I think it's a great program," said Zieroth, the leading petty officer for motor pool. "It gives enlisted personnel that opportunity to make a crossover into the officer realm. You can draw on your experience as an enlisted Sailor to kind of bridge the gap between your academy or regular officer and enlisted personnel. You can use your expertise to be on both sides of the fence to aid the Navy and other officers and enlisted."

The Sailors will attend the eight-week Naval Science Institute course prior to beginning college.

SM rating to be disestablished

Chief of Naval Personnel
Public Affairs

In yet another move to better balance the skill mix in the fleet and more efficiently meet readiness requirements, the Navy announced plans to disestablish the signalman (SM) rating over the course of the next year.

The visual signaling competency of the SM rating will become part of the quartermaster (QM) rating, consolidating skill sets by aligning all visual communication skills into one rating.

"This is absolutely the right thing to do," said Vice Adm. Gerry Hoewing, Chief

of Naval Personnel. "It will promote efficiency at sea through better use of our Sailors, better use of modern technology and better use of our communications resources."

Approximately 10 percent of SM-rated Sailors will be converted to QM. The rest will be offered the opportunity to convert into other ratings.

"We are committed to giving each and every signalman careful consideration and ample assistance in finding a new rating," said Hoewing. "We understand the impact this will have on their careers. That's why the dis-establishment will be phased in over the

course of a year and that's why we will work hard to provide each and every one of them viable career options."

The schedule for SM advancement exams and selection boards over the next year is as follows:

January 2004 - final E-7 (active) exam
February 2004 - final E-7 (reserve) exam
March 2004 - final E-8/9 selection board
May 2004 - final E-7 (reserve) selection board
July 2004 - final E-7 (active) selection board
August 2004 - final E-4/5/6 (reserve) exams
September 2004 - final E-4/5/6 (active) exams

Personnel officials say it is critical that command retention teams work closely with their SMs to ensure they are aware of conversion options, have the most up-to-date ASVAB [Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery] scores on record, and select the CREO one and two ratings for which they are fully qualified.

The SM rating was formed during the years following World War II. Prior to that, the QM rating was responsible for all aspects of visual communication at sea. Those requirements were never actually removed from the QM

▼ See SM, A-4

Submariners break the ice



U.S. Navy Photo

USS Honolulu (SSN 718) returned from the high Arctic where the submarine collected scientific data and water samples for U.S. and Canadian universities. USS Honolulu is the first original design Los Angeles class submarine to visit the North Pole.

Adoption Conference draws military families from across Oahu

JO1 Daniel J. Calderón
Editor

November is National Adoption Month. The Army Community Service Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) and the Hawai'i Adoption and Permanency Alliance (HAPA) presented an Adoption Conference on Nov. 8 at Fort Shafter Flats.

"When I first became the EFMP manager, statistics indicated that more than half of adoptions in Hawai'i are by military families," said Janet Bamford, Army Community Service EFMP manager. "However, even though HAPA holds an adoption conference every year, very few military attend."

Bamford's idea was to combine EFMP and HAPA resources and bring the conference to military families who may be interested in adopting or fostering a child. To accomplish this, Bamford invited military families from all over the island to learn more about

adoption and child fostering.

This year's national theme, "There's no place like home," reflected the need for children in foster care or awaiting adoptive placement to find a place to call home, said Bamford. She also brought in adoption and child service agencies from across Oahu to be a part of the conference.

"We generally place 40 to 50 children a year," said Vanice Cockreham, director of domestic programs for Hawai'i International Child (HIC). "China is our largest program and Kazakhstan is another."

In addition to international children, HIC assists with adoptions for Hawai'i families for children from the mainland. Cockreham and HIC helped place a nine-year-old child from Texas with a Navy family on island.

"The family saw the child on www.adoptuskids.org," Cockreham said. "That site has about 1,000 kids."

Four months is the fastest she has

ever seen from filing to placement of the child. Cockreham said the process took about five months from the time they filed the application to the time the child came home for the Navy family.

"That's pretty typical for a child her age," Cockreham said. "A sibling group is also a fairly quick match. It's a little slower when you try and match a specific age and sex of the child."

Once the child is placed in a home, there is a six-month supervisory period where the family is observed with the child to ensure a good match for both the family and the child.

"There are so many children that don't have a home and this is a wonderful way to extend your family to them," Cockreham said. "Bringing a child into your home can be a wonderful and rewarding experience."

Raymond Zeason Esquire, a local

▼ See ADOPTION, A-4



Photo by JOC(SW) Tim Paynter
Rebecca Ruegger, a Navy spouse, sits and reads to her kids. Ruegger's adoption of her daughter was finalized in May.